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## Church Delays Arms Pact Hearings To Study Soviet Troop Use in Cuba

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 4 — Senator Frank Church, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, announced today that hearings on the nuclear arms treaty would be postponed so his committee could "deal immediately" with reports of Soviet combat forces in Cuba.

The committee was to have heard members of the House of Representatives testify tomorrow as hearings on the strategic arms limitation treaty resumed with the return of Congress after a month's recess.

Instead, because of concern voiced by Mr. Church and others on the committee, Adm. Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence, will testify in the morning and Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance will testify in the afternoon about

the Cuban situation. Both will be heard behind closed doors.

President Carter, aware of potential political problems over the Soviet forces, met with his advisers and Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, the majority leader, about the matter.

In addition, Mr. Vance, Admiral Turner, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's national security adviser, and Defense Secretary Harold Brown conferred at the White House without the President to develop options on how he might respond to the Soviet activity.

Mr. Church issued a statement today saying, "The United States cannot permit the Soviets to establish a military base on Cuban soil nor can we allow Cuba to be used as a springboard for real or threatened Russian military intervention in the hemisphere."

### Church Takes the Lead

Faced with a difficult re-election battle in Idaho against conservatives who have mounted a major campaign against him, Mr. Church has taken the lead in the committee in expressing concern about the report of the Soviet forces.

Although the Idaho Democrat put off tomorrow's hearing on the nuclear arms treaty, his aides said there was no intention now to cancel the remainder of the hearings, a move advocated by Senator Bob Dole, Republican of Kansas, and Senator Harry F. Byrd Jr., independent of Virginia, neither of whom is on the committee.

On Friday, the State Department announced that United States intelligence had decided that the available evidence pointed to the presence in Cuba of a Soviet combat unit of 2,000 to 3,000 men. The department said the unit, referred to by officials informally as a brigade, had armored, artillery and infantry elements.

Officials said they had no solid information on the mission of the force, but the leading speculation in the Administration was that it was in Cuba as a token of Soviet support for Cuba's defense while nearly 40,000 Cuban forces, backed by the Soviet Union, were stationed in Africa, mostly in Angola and Ethiopia. Cuba is estimated by Western specialists to have about 189,000 men under arms.

State and Defense Department officials said today that the Soviet force was no military threat to the United States, but officials in the State Department acknowledged that it did constitute a political problem of some magnitude.

### Effect on Treaty Debate

Officials said there was concern that critics of the proposed strategic arms treaty might use the Soviet presence as a rallying cry to persuade senators sympathetic to the treaty to vote against it.

Mr. Church, for instance, who is expected to play a major role in seeking approval of the treaty when it reaches the Senate floor later this year, has signaled the Administration that the Soviet presence in Cuba could change his plans.

"What possible justification is there for Soviet combat troops?" Mr. Church asked rhetorically in his statement.

Speaking of the current conference in Havana, Mr. Church said, "We also deserve an answer from Cuban President Fidel Castro as to how his willingness to permit Soviet troops to hold military maneuvers on the island conforms to his professed adherence to the principles of nonalignment."

### Step-by-Step Revelations

One Administration official said intelligence reports about a Soviet command structure in Cuba had come in as early as a year ago but had received only low-level attention.

This July, Defense Secretary Brown told a closed-door meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about indications of a command structure. There was no solid information then on the existence of a brigade-sized formation.

Senator Richard Stone, Democrat of Florida, who also faces re-election, raised the matter publicly late in July but was assured by Mr. Vance that information then available did not indicate any "significant Soviet forces" in Cuba other than the 1,500- to 2,000-man military advisory group that has been in Cuba for 15 years.

This has led to charges from Senator Stone that the United States had an intelligence failure and that the Administration was trying to "whitewash" the Soviet presence in Cuba.

The United States has raised the matter through diplomatic channels with both the Soviet Union and Cuba. Officials said today that the Cubans responded privately, as they have publicly, in effect telling the United States the issue was none of its business.